

A Look at Music Through the Ages

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor
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Signed

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Abstract

Music is, as we know, organized into many different eras based on different compositional and performance techniques and of course various composers. Even subtle changes from one era to the next create drastic differences in music over longer periods of time. This recital was planned to draw upon several different major eras of vocal music and explore the different techniques and styles characteristic to each. Because of the limitations of my own voice and time restrictions, this recital focused on four eras of music; Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and 20th Century. The following Author's Statement is a description of the planning and preparation process preceding the recital, and also information on each selection performed in the recital.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin with a huge thanks to Dr. Craig Priebe for the last four years as my voice teacher. Without him pushing me to new heights I never would have gotten to this point. Beyond that, I would like to thank him for his willingness to be my advisor on this project. As I graduate and begin teaching my own students I take his lessons to heart and use the techniques I learned from him everyday.

Thank you to Dr. Galit Gertsenzon Fromm for her work as my accompanist during the recital semester. The schedule was rough sometimes, but she always made time for me and she worked hard to make sure all of my music was perfect. Thank you for your encouraging words throughout the semester.

Another huge thank you to Micaela Basilici, Angela Hetrick, and Sarah Klemm for their willingness to perform alongside me in this endeavor. Thank you for all the extra practice and rehearsal that preceded the performance.

Finally, Thank you to all of my family and friends who came to the performance and who encouraged me throughout the last four years at Ball State. I couldn't have done it without you.

Author's Statement

Preparing for a recital is always a long and difficult journey. You could say that I have been preparing for this since my first year on campus. It was always my intention to give a recital for my thesis; not just because it might be easier and less time consuming than trying to do a research topic for an already over-booked Music Education major, but because it would be a great culmination of all the hard work I had done over the years in private voice lessons, both during high school and college. This recital gave me a chance to show off music I had worked on during the last four years, along with a several new pieces picked especially for the event. Many members of my family had never heard me sing, and none since my performances in high school. Going into education, I knew this might very well be my only chance to show my family and friends what I had spent the last four years learning.

I first really began thinking of what direction I might like to take with my recital during my junior year. I know that many people choose a theme, but I was also told that it wasn't actually necessary. Because of this, I decided not explicitly to choose a theme that interconnected each piece of music, but rather an overarching theme that would allow me a much broader choice of repertoire. Thus I came up with the idea of performing songs that I felt were representative of the style of certain musical eras. Because of my own voice type and my very limited repertoire from the Renaissance period, I began with the Baroque era (ca. 1600-1750). From there I moved to the Classical era (ca. 1750-1820), then Romantic (ca. 1850-1910), and ended with songs and arias of the 20th Century (ca. 1910-

2000); an era which I feel contains music many people, even outside of the music world, might recognize.

To begin, Dr. Priebe and I sat down and took a look at the repertoire I had worked on during the last three years. After choosing from this list, we had about two-thirds of my final program. Because I had only a limited selection of songs from previous repertoire for each era I knew that I would need to add more songs to further flesh out the program.

For the opening set representing the Baroque era, we added two songs by Alessandro Scarlatti: *Tu lo sai* and “Se Florindo è Fedele”, drawn from the *Twenty-Four Italian Songs and Arias*, an anthology of famous early Italian songs. This was followed by the J.S. Bach aria: *Ich folge dir gleichfalls* from the St. John’s Passion which I had previously performed.

The words *tu lo sai* translate to: “you know it”, referring to “you know how I loved you”. The speaker in the song calls the lover “cruel one” and “unfaithful,” and is less a happy love song than it is an expression of the anguish and bitterness of a lover scorned. Scarlatti’s music reflects this sober textual background with more austere and homophonic figures.

In contrast, the aria “Se Florindo è Fedele” from Scarlatti’s opera, *La donna ancora è fedele*, offered the perfect counterpoint to *Tu lo sai* with its faster tempo and somewhat livelier feel. In this piece, Florindo is a man that the singer is willing to fall in love with as long as he remains faithful. On the other hand, she vows that she can defend herself from flattering glances and Cupid’s bow if he does not. This is an interesting contrast to the events of *Tu lo sai* where the lover

has already been unfaithful and the singer wishes to no longer be in love with him or her. Though the text of “Se Florindo è Fedele” is shorter, Scarlatti wrote more notes for many words, lending the song a more bouncy feeling through its elaborate melismas. The text and music of this piece are more playful than the more serious *Tu lo sai* so I had more fun and was able to smile and play with facial expression more during the performance.

The final piece within the Baroque era, “Ich folge dir gleichfalls” from *Passio Secundum Joannem* or *St. John's Passion* by J. S. Bach is a sacred aria for soprano, flute and orchestra. Our version featured Sarah Klemm on the flute and Galit Gertsenzon Fromm at the piano. In many ways this aria seemed more like a trio with voice, flute, and piano in how Bach's brilliant melodies, melismas and supporting harmonies were shared and passed among us though, of course, the piano (orchestra) provided the main supportive structure of the aria. “Ich folge dir gleichfalls” is a longer piece that was much more technically challenging for me than either of the previous songs. Unlike the previous Italian set, this song is in German and features less text, but many more repetitions and required more rehearsal time between Sarah, Galit, and myself in order to get timing and articulation correct.

Because this is an aria from an oratorio (which can in simple terms be thought of as a sacred opera without staging) and one of the two longest pieces in my recital, I sang using the score in performance. This meant that I also had to get used to singing with a music stand; not looking directly at the music but out into the audience. I really felt that this was one of my most challenging pieces,

and even the week of my recital I found myself struggling with some of the chromatic sections.

From there, the recital moved on to three songs from the Classical Era, *Caro mio ben*, *Ridente la calma*, and “Sull’aria.” The first song from this set, *Caro mio ben* by Giuseppe Giordani, is a piece I had often heard performed but never considered for myself. Once again, the theme of love came into play. The text reminds me of *Tu lo sai*, the words *caro mio ben* literally mean “my dear beloved”. The song goes on to say that “without you my heart languishes” yet calls the lover “cruel one”. The tempo of the song reflects the complexity of emotion expressed in the text, being slower and more dramatic. As I began to practice this piece, I really started to fall in love with it and found that its slower tempo fit my voice and allowed me to release into a full-voiced and passionate vocalism.

Ridente la calma is a piece I had learned the previous semester and that we felt would fit well with *Caro mio ben*. In my opinion, the inclusion of at least one piece by Mozart in the Classical section of this recital was absolutely necessary because he is one of the most famous and prolific composers of that era. Again this song deals with love, although not in exactly the same way as the previous songs; instead this song talks more of a happy calm arising in the soul. Mozart sets the text musically with two very different sections. The first section is somewhat slower and more lyrical and repeats after the contrasting middle section composed of faster and more elaborate passages meant to express a happy calm within which neither fear nor anger can survive. In my opinion, it is

more dramatic and fits with the words that describe “chains around the heart, put there by a beloved one”. This is not the simple scorned love, or unrequited love of earlier songs.

Mozart's *Ridente la calma* is particularly close to my heart, being one my audition pieces for Ball State School of Music and also the piece I took to both District and State ISSMA Solo and Ensemble my senior year of high school where I earned gold medals. It was a real pleasure to bring this piece back three years later and work on it with a voice that had changed so much more than I had fully realized. When working with new music, it isn't always easy to see that changes have taken place. I particularly noticed that the large vocal intervals that seemed tight and difficult in the past had become much easier and smoother for me to negotiate. Suggestions that my previous voice teacher had offered me in the past came naturally this time around. *Ridente la calma* was a wonderful addition to my recital. My high school voice teacher was in the audience the day of the recital and was extremely pleased and proud of the growth she could see and hear in that particular song.

The final selection representing the Classical era was a duet from Mozart's opera *Le Nozze di Figaro*: “Sull'aria,” which I performed with Micaela Basilici. This duet by Mozart is from one of his most famous operas, known to many English speakers as *The Marriage of Figaro*. “Sull'aria,” another Italian piece, was one of my favorite pieces to perform. In this duet I sing the part of the Countess, and Micaela, Susanna, her chambermaid. This song takes place later in the opera in the 3rd act. By this point, the Countess is certain that her husband,

Count Almaviva, desires an amorous rendezvous with Susanna, so she and Susanna devise a plan to catch him in his infidelity. The Countess dictates a letter to Susanna intended for the Count inviting him to a rendezvous with Susanna later than evening “under the pines”. The Countess plans to disguise herself as Susanna and attend the meeting in her stead. At the end of the duet, the Countess begins to doubt whether she can follow through with the plan, but Susanna consoles her and encourages her to finish what they have started.

Even though “Sull’aria” was not the most technically challenging piece vocally, it did present me with some challenges to overcome. The first was to find a vocal blend that allowed our voices to mix and, at the same time, sing freely staying true to our individual voices and techniques. The other challenge emerged toward the final rehearsals when Dr. Priebe decided that the duet would be more effective with some basic staging. This required some work between Micaela and myself to get the timing right, and to make the acting seem as natural as possible.

After a brief intermission, the recital resumed with two selections from the Romantic era, “The Flower Duet” from *Lakmé* by Leo Delibes and “Song to the Moon” from *Rusalka* by Antonin Dvorak. As the Classical era closed with a duet, I felt it appropriate to begin the Romantic era with the very famous duet known as “The Flower Duet” that I shared with another good friend and fellow Music Education Major, Angela Hetrick. In this particular piece, Lakmé (myself) and Mallika (Angela) are at the river gathering flowers in India. Lakmé is worried about her father, a priest who has gone into town. She fears he may be hurt or

killed. Mallika (sometimes called her servant, other times her friend) reassures her that nothing bad will happen. They continue to walk along the river.

Vocally, this piece was quite challenging because it contains both recitative (a more spoken form of singing that moves the plot) juxtaposed with the more flowing and beautiful sections of lyrical singing. Most of the staged action occurs during the recitative which moved very quickly and with less in the way of a steady rhythmic pulse and piano accompaniment. This meant both Angela and I had to be very secure with our rhythms, pitches, and text. This song also demands a very large vocal range with a high tessitura, which could be vocally taxing if not sung correctly. We spent a lot of time working on the best technique to use with this song. One thing we struggled with was staying in tune on some of the quick runs that were generally a third apart. By the week of the recital we had mostly corrected this and I think it went very well at the recital.

Angela is a mezzo-soprano, and we had learned this piece together the previous year. We both loved this piece and after hearing two doctoral students perform it in a recital our freshman year, we knew we wanted to one day sing it. Angela is a French minor so she had a somewhat easier time with the text of this piece than I did. We both put a lot of work into memorizing the piece and also learning to convey the meaning of the words to the audience. Although we didn't technically stage this piece, we did try to use our bodies and facial expressions to convey to the audience just what was happening in the story. It also helps that the audience had translations of the text, a copy of which is attached to this paper.

“Song to the Moon” from Dvorak’s opera *Rusalka*, was the first song in the recital sung in an English (translated from the original Czech version). I like to think of the story of this Romantic era opera as a much darker and depressing version of *The Little Mermaid*. Although *Rusalka* isn’t technically a mermaid she is the daughter of the Spirit of the Lake, Jezibaba. In “Song to the Moon,” *Rusalka* tells her father that she has fallen in love with a handsome human prince and wants to become human in order to be with him. Her father gives his consent and then leaves. She sings her song to the moon about her secret love and her fears and excitement for the future. Unfortunately, things do not go according to plan and the opera does not end happily, as many operas are wont to do.

Out of all the songs in my recital, “Song to the moon” was my favorite because it was the most challenging for me vocally. This song has a wide range of notes with an ending section that moves quickly and climbs to a high B with very little warning. The text of this piece is truly beautiful and the emotions of *Rusalka* are reflected in the piano accompaniment even more beautifully. Even after having practiced and performed it the previous semester, “Song to the Moon” demanded a great deal of additional work before it was ready to be sung in recital. I truly loved singing this song, and I hope to one day learn it in the original Czech.

Because the theme of this recital was chronological in nature, it came to a close with the 20th Century pieces, “My Ship” from *Lady in the Dark* by Kurt Weill, “Summertime” from *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin, and “Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again” from *The Phantom of the Opera* by Andrew Lloyd

Webber. These three pieces are quite different than many of the other selections from this recital, and although not all of these are particularly well known, many 20th Century pieces are more accessible to the average person. I had a particularly hard time deciding what order to perform this final set in, so I finally came to the conclusion that it would be easiest to perform them in the order I had learned them.

I began with the song “My Ship” from *Lady in the Dark*; a complex musical theater drama with lyrics by Ira Gershwin and music by Kurt Weill that opened on Broadway in 1941. “My Ship” is sung in its entirety only once and late in the drama. Liza, the main character, is a fashion magazine editor undergoing psychoanalysis. She is haunted by a melody from her past throughout the first act and most of the second, until she remembers the song clearly as one from her childhood. At this point, she realizes that the root of her problems point to a childhood trauma; the death of her mother at a young age. She begins to seek help and her life begins to look up. “My Ship” represents a turning point in the musical and as such it is both happy and sad. The tune is somewhat melancholy, but the idea that Liza has now realized her problems and can begin to move on, puts the song in a more optimistic context.

I originally learned this piece as a sophomore and found it interesting to pick up two years later. Muscle memory is an amazing thing. After running through it a few times, it settled back into my voice and memory comfortably allowing me to proceed with interpretation and polishing. This piece highlighted the lower register of my voice instead of the soaring high notes characteristic of

most soprano arias. I found it easy to learn and perform simply because it was so enjoyable.

“Summertime” is an aria from the opera, *Porgy and Bess* composed by George Gershwin in 1934. The plot of the opera is set among a community of people living in Catfish Row in Charleston, South Carolina. “Summertime” is heard near the very beginning; Clara sings it as a lullaby to her child. Clara is poor and living in poverty, but she sings to her child of better times when the “living is easy” and “your daddy’s rich, and your mama’s good looking.” Although the lyrics themselves seem optimistic, when put into context, the poverty and difficulty of life in Catfish Row is clearly visible. The long held notes at the end of phrases can be interpreted as wails or sighs as Clara considers her lot in life and the situation in which she is raising her child.

Although *Porgy and Bess* is an opera, it is possible to find many recordings of the song “Summertime” sung with popular, musical theater and vocal jazz styles. I found the most challenging part of this piece was balancing elements of these styles with operatic vocalism. I think I achieved that, and from listening to many different takes on the song, I was able to make my own mark upon it. One of the biggest changes came at the end. Although Gershwin wrote a very simple ending to the piece, I quickly found that very few performers sing what is written in the original score. Through trial and error, Dr. Priebe and I were eventually able to devise an ending with an expressive glissando that mimicked a heartfelt lament or cry and brought the aria to a beautiful and dramatic close.

“Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again” from *Phantom of the Opera* was the final piece in the recital and also another musical theatre selection. This song occurs later in the musical when Christine is walking through the graveyard where her father is buried. She is feeling the pressure of her life, and wishes her father were still alive to protect her and tell her what to do. Although not a happy piece, the words and meaning are beautiful and more restful than some of the earlier pieces. Again I took a few liberties with the end. In the score the end is written very simply, and oddly enough I have never heard it performed the way it was written. After speaking with Dr. Priebe we added a simple repeat and octave leap to the last few measures to make the piece sound a little more complete and truer to its Broadway performance.

This is a piece I had wanted to sing since high school. I first fell in love with Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *The Phantom of the Opera* in choir during my freshman year of high school. I immediately bought a copy of the songbook, and tried to teach myself nearly every song. I never found an occasion to sing one of them until this recital offered the perfect opportunity. “Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again” was somewhat difficult for me because its tessitura is quite low. I had to work to really project on those passages in order to be heard. Even so, I loved this piece and it was a wonderful end to the recital.

A lot of work over the course of more than three years is the only thing that made this recital possible. I feel incredibly blessed to have been given the chance to work with such amazing musicians to put on a recital for my Senior Thesis. I appreciate all the time and effort of everyone involved. As graduation

quickly approaches this project is something I look back on as a truly impressive accomplishment of my four years at Ball State University.

Supplements

Supplemental materials such as a copy of the recital program, translation sheet, and CD recording can be found in another portion of this binder.

A YouTube video of the recital can also be found at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9Q3dHJ2Krs>

Works Cited

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School of Music

Honors Thesis Recital

A LOOK AT MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES

Saturday, November 1, 2014
Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

ALISHA REEVE, soprano

with

Micaela Basilici, soprano Angela Hetrick, mezzo-soprano
Sarah Klemm, flute Galit Gertsenzon-Fromm, piano

Baroque

Alessandro Scarlatti
(1659-1725)

**Tu lo sai
Se Florindo é fedele**

J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

“Ich folge dir gleichfalls” from *St. John Passion*

Sarah Klemm, flute

Classical

Giuseppe Giordani
(1744-1798)

Caro mio ben

W. A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Ridente la calma

W. A. Mozart

“Sull’aria” from *Le nozze de Figaro*

Micaela Basilici, soprano

Romantic

Léo Delibes
(1836-1891)

“Sous le dôme épais” from *Lakmé*

Angela Hetrick, mezzo-soprano

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

“Song to the Moon” from *Rusalka*

20th Century

Kurt Weill
(1900-1950)

“My Ship” from *Lady in the Dark*

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

“Summertime” from *Porgy and Bess*

Andrew Lloyd Webber
(b. 1948)

**“Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again”
from *The Phantom of the Opera***

Alisha Reeve is a student of Craig Priebe.
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors Program at Ball State University.

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School of Music  
NOVEMBER COMING EVENTS

**Muncie Symphony Orchestra**

Saturday, November 1, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

**East Central Indiana Youth Symphony Orchestra**

Sunday, November 2, Sursa Hall, 3:00 p.m.

**Graduate Recital: Lauren Anthony, soprano**

Sunday, November 2, Sursa Hall, 5:30 p.m.

**Viola Choir**

Monday, November 3, Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

**Student Jazz Combo Concert**

Tuesday, November 4, Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

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Texts and Translations

**Alisha Reeve, soprano**

Galit Gertsenzon, piano   Sarah Klemm, flute   Micaela Basilici, soprano

Angela Hetrick, mezzo-soprano

Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup> 2014   Choral Hall   5:30 pm

**“Tu lo sai”**

Tu lo sai quanto t’amai,  
Tu lo sai, lo sai, crudel!

You know how much I love you,  
You know it, cruel one!

Io non bramo altra merce,  
Ma ricordati di me,  
E poi sprezza un infidel.

I need desire no other mercy,  
But that you remember me,  
And then despise an unfaithful-one!

Tu lo sai quanto t’amai,  
Tu lo sai, lo sai, crudel!

You know how much I love you,  
You know it, cruel one!

**“Se Florindo è fedele”**

Se Florindo è fedele,  
io m’innamorerò.

If Florindo is faithful,  
I will fall in love.

Potrà ben l’arco tendere  
il faretrato archier,  
Ch’io mi saprò difendere da un guardo  
lusinghier.

The archer with the quiver may draw his  
bow,  
For I know how to defend myself from a  
flattering glance.

Pregghi, pianti, e querele io non  
ascolterò.  
Ma se sarà fedele, io m’innamorerò.

Pleas, tears, and complaints I will not  
hear,  
But if he is faithful, I will fall in love.

**“Ich folge dir gleichfalls” from *Passio  
Secundum Joannem***

Ich folge dir gleichfalls  
mit freudigen Schritten  
und lasse dich nicht,  
mein Leben, mein Licht.  
Befördre den Lauf  
Und höre nicht auf,  
selbst an mir zu ziehen,  
zu schieben, zu bitten.

I follow you also  
with joyful steps  
and leave you not,  
my life, my light.  
Hasten the flow  
and stop not  
to draw me to yourself  
to lead, to intercede.

**“Caro mio ben”**

Caro mio ben,  
credimi almen,  
Senza di te  
Languisce il cor.

Il tuo fedel  
sospira ognor.  
Cessa crudel,  
tanto rigor!

Caro mio ben,  
credimi almen,  
Senza di te  
Languisce il cor.

**“Ridente la calma”**

Ridente la calma nell’alma si desti;  
Né resti più segno di sdegno e timor.

Tu vieni, frattanto, a stringer mio bene,  
Le dolce catene sí grate al mio cor.

Ridente la calma nell’alma si desti;  
Né resti più segno di sdegno e timor.

**“Sull’aria’ from *Le nozze di Figaro***

Sull’aria...

Che soave zeffiretto...  
Questa sera spirerà...  
Sotto i pini del boschetto.

Ei già il resot capirà.  
Certo, certo il capirà.

Dear, my beloved,  
believe me at least,  
that without you  
languishes the heart.

Your faithful lover  
sighs always.  
Cease, cruel one,  
this torture.

Dear, my beloved,  
believe me at least,  
that without you  
languishes the heart.

May a happy calm arise in my soul  
And may neither a bit of anger nor fear  
survive in it.

In the meantime you are coming, my  
beloved, to grasp those sweet chains that  
make my heart so grateful.

May a happy calm arise in my soul  
And may neither a bit of anger nor fear  
survive in it.

To the breeze...

What a gentle little breeze...  
This evening will blow...  
Beneath the pine trees of the little grove.

He will already understand the rest.  
Certainly, certainly he will understand.



## **"The Flower Duet" from *Lakmé***

Viens, Mallika, les lianes en fleurs  
jettent déjà leur ombre  
sur le ruisseau sacré qui coule,  
calme sombre,  
éveillé par le chant de oiseaux tapageurs!

Oh, maîtresse, c'est l'heure où je te vois  
sourire,  
l'heure bénie o je puis lire  
dans le cœur toujours fermé de Lakmé!

Dôme épais,  
Sous le dome épais,  
le jasmine  
où le blanc jasmine  
à la rose s'assemble,  
rive en fleurs  
sur la rive en fleurs  
frais matin,  
riant au matin,  
nous appelant ensemble.  
viens, descendons ensemble.  
Ah! glissons  
Doucement glissons  
en suivant  
de son flot charmant  
le courant fuyant:  
suivons le courant fuyant:  
dans l'onde frémissante,  
d'une main nonchalante,  
gagnons le bord,  
viens, gagnon le bord,  
où l'oiseau chante,  
où la source dort  
l'oiseau, l'oiseau chante.  
et l'oiseau, l'oiseau chante.  
Dôme épais,  
Sous le dome épais,  
blanc jasmine  
sous le blanc jasmine  
nous appelant ensemble.  
ah! descendons ensemble.

Come, Mallika, the lianes in bloom  
already throw their shadow  
over the sacred stream which runs, calm  
and somber,  
awakened by the song of the noisy birds.

Oh, mistress, it is the hour when I see you  
smiling,  
the blessed hour when I can read  
the always closed heart of Lakmé.

Dome thick,  
Under the thick dome,  
the jasmine  
where the white jasmine  
with the rose entwines,  
riverbank in bloom  
on the riverbank in bloom  
fresh morning,  
laughing in the morning,  
we call together.  
come, let us go down together.  
Ah! we glide  
Gently we glide  
while following  
on its waters charming  
the current fleeting  
let us follow the current fleeting  
on the waves shimmering,  
with a hand uncaring,  
let us reach the bank,  
come, let us reach the bank,  
where the bird sings,  
where the spring sleeps,  
the bird, the bird sings.  
and the bird, the bird sings.  
Dome thick,  
Under the thick dome,  
white jasmine  
beneath the white jasmine  
we call together.  
Ah! let us go down together.

Mais, je ne sais quelle crainte subite,  
S'empare de moi,  
Quand mon père va seul à leur ville  
maudite;  
Je tremble, je tremble d'effroi!

L'ourquoi le Dieu Ganeça le protégé,  
jusqu'à l'étang où s'ébattent joyeux  
les cygnes aux ailes de neige, allons  
cueiller les lotus bleus.

Oui, près des cygnes aux ailles de neige,  
allons cueillir les lotus bleus.

But, I do not know what sudden fear  
takes hold of me,  
as my father goes alone to their cursed  
city;  
I tremble, I tremble with fear!

The god Ganeça protects him,  
to the pond where joyously frolic  
the swans with wings of snow  
let us go gather the blue lotus.

Yes, near the swans with wings of snow,  
let us go gather the blue lotus.